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ABSTRACT

The influence of linguistic research on the development of materials, procedures, and approaches to reading instruction is discussed. The words "reading" and "linguistics" are defined. The difference between the terms "linguistics" and "phonics" is clarified by showing that the goal of instruction--to break the code--is the same but the methods used are not. Criticisms are made of work typical of many phonics programs which do not use linguistically-based teaching-learning procedures. Teachers are encouraged to be keenly aware of their own operational definitions of reading and how instructional materials relate to their definition. Other aspects of linguistic influence mentioned are (1) the use of more natural language styles, (2) the use of illustrations to support the text, (3) relating oral language to print, and (4) the use of more involved sentence patterns to match the child's acquired language. References are included. (DH)

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Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading

Although perhaps trite, and certainly traditional, a necessary beginning for a presentation of this type is an attempt at defining some terms. Those terms which are central to the ideas which will be presented here are, of course, "linguistics" and "reading". Definitions of at least these basic terms are important, not because there are people in this audience who are unfamiliar with the terms, but because an audience, whether it consists of listeners or readers, is entitled to know the frame of reference from which a speaker or writer is operating. It then becomes the task of the listener or reader to evaluate, to compare the proposed definitions with others he's heard or read, and to select the definition for operational purposes which meets most of the criteria he's established.

Before supplying the definitions which are basic to this presentation, and as further justification for beginning this way, something in the nature of a warning, a signal to begin the application of thinking skills is in order. There is not a great deal of agreement, even among "experts", regarding the dimensions of the term linguistics, especially as this field, or cluster of related fields, impinges upon reading instruction. Linguists themselves have contributed to both controversies. The criticisms they've proposed about the vague, broad, somewhat impractical and almost meaningless definitions of reading upon which reading instruction was based for a number of years deserve to be taken seriously. Obviously, not all linguists are concerned about reading instruction. It's also true that many reading "experts" reject without analysis the concept that linguists have any substantive contribution to make to improving methods and materials for reading instruction. This view appears to be somewhat chauvinistic and short-sighted, and it is rejected by the speaker.

Linguistics, as the term is used here, refers to the scientific study of language. It encompasses such fields as phonology, the careful and precise study

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of the sound system of a language; syntax, rigorous examination of the way words are ordered and combined in a language; and morphology, a study of the techniques employed by speakers of a language to indicate changes in person or tense. Some would add to this list a study of the lexicon of a language. However, because so much of a word's "meaning" derives from its grammatical as well as its sociological and psychological environment, a study of isolated words seems to be a less promising field of linguistic endeavor than those previously mentioned, at least in terms of potential, positive contributions to the field of reading. These somewhat artificially divided facets of language, phonology, morphology, syntax, and, if you wish, lexicography, can be studied vertically, with concern for historical change, or horizontally, with the focus on comparisons of various current languages or dialects. Nelson Francis used the terms diachronic (historical) and synchronic (current, or 'at a given point in time').[1] These are traditional and accepted divisions of linguistic science. The Center for Applied Linguistics, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., has both led in the development of and reflected a tendency to look at language in still a different way. Roger Shuy was introduced to an I.R.A. symposium as a 'Sociolinguist', one whose special field of study is language as an agent of and a reflector of social change - in Roger Shuy's case, the particular concern is black dialects. The I.R.A. has established a "Psycholinguistics and Reading Committee"; a psycholinguist, like a sociolinguist, looks at language in a more holistic manner than, perhaps, linguistic specialists have in the past. The special interest of the psycholinguist is that which linguists avoided for years - meaning, personality factors, all those factors which common sense and careful observation of those who are in the process of acquiring language (and that's all of us, throughout our lives) should have taught us not to avoid. It's important for a teacher of reading to be aware of the more traditional divisions of linguists' work, (phonology, morphology, and syntax) and the approaches taken to the study of one or more of these divisions - diachronic or synchronic. It's undoubtedly even more important for the teacher of reading to be cognizant of the trend toward looking at language in a more

[1] Nelson Francis, The Structure of American English, New York, Ronald Press, 1958. Pp. 21-25.

natural, holistic manner. Everything which affects the child's acquisition of language and his life-long efforts to use language more effectively affects the child's reading. There is justification, in terms of research, for reducing language to it's smallest, most fundamental components - sounds or sound-letter relationships for example, but neither linguist nor teachers should be decived into thinking that such research sheds much light on the totality which is language. To see a tree is important, but one should not be deceived into thinking that having examined the tree, he knows the forest. To summarize, linguistics is the scientific study of language and in 1970 this means <u>not</u> ignoring the interrelationships of the parts, or the relationship of each part to the whole.

Reading is more difficult to define than linguistics, yet it's probably true that for teachers of reading, arriving at a practical yet theoretically sound definition of reading is of tremendous importance, if not essential. The definition of reading upon which one operates, the concept one has of the nature of the reading task, determines the scope and sequence of the teaching learning strategies he employs. The reading program in a classroom in which the teacher sees reading as primarily (or exclusively) a decoding operation, a process of selecting the most appropriate sound-symbol generalization or generalizations for returning print to speech will be far, far different from the reading program in the classroom in which the stress is put on meaning and comprehension. The materials used will be different, the questions asked of pupils and the tasks pupils are expected to perform will not be the same in these classrooms. The teacher whose emphasis is on the decoding facet of reading selects materials with primary concern for the sequence of word analysis skills utilized by the authors and publishers. These skills will be presented in a carefully arranged sequence which is varied only in terms of rate of presentation. <u>Nothing</u> is skipped, because such skipping might leave 'gaps' in the child's array of reading competencies. The teacher whose definition includes primary concern for developing reading-thinking skills will make more use of experience charts, trade books, newspapers and periodicals. The questions asked in the "decoding" classroom have answers which are clearly correct or incorrect. The word is mit, or met, or mat. In the 'meaning' classroom neither pupil nor teacher has such security! There are inference questions, "why questions, questions which

probe authors purpose and character motivation. Because of the impact such a definition has on methods and materials, it is extremely important that each elementary teacher work toward an operationally effective definition of reading. It has already been noted that "experts" do not agree on what reading is, nor do they agree on what facets of the reading act should be emphasized at various levels of a child's development. In Reading in the Elementary School George and Evelyn Spache note that: "Reading is obviously a multifaceted process, a process that, like a chameleon, changes its nature from one developmental stage to the next."[2] They include the following as descriptive of (but not defining) the reading process:

- Reading as skill development; - beginning with word recognition, proceding to 'critical' or evaluative reading.

- Reading as a visual act; a successive series of eye movements, fixations and regressions.

- Reading as a perceptual act; the recognition of a word and assuming to it a meaning, based upon past experience.

- Reading as a reflection of cultural background; "Elevator" means one thing to a rural child, another to a child who lives in the city. The pre-adolescent who follows the crops reads The Loner form one point of view, the well cared for suburban child from another. Criticisms have been heaped upon authors and publishers of basal series because of their narrow, unrealistic and frequently bigoted content and format. Changing illustrations does not change the WASP orientation of too many of these books.

Finally, the Spaches note that reading is a thinking process. The questions teachers ask, the questions good readers ask themselves before, during and after reading reflect previous thinking and stimulate mental growth.[3]

The only appropriate critical comment about this list has undoubtedly been anticipated. Little emphasis was given to language as it relates to the reading process. Oral language in general and phonology in particular are significant aspects of the reading process. If vision deserves special focus, and it does, shouldn't auditory discrimination and perception be stressed, too?

[2] George D. and Evelyn Spache, Reading in the Elementary School, Boston Allyn and Bacon, 1969. Pp. 3.

[3] ibid, Ch. 1

Kenneth Goodman's definition of reading is quite broad. He writes: "Reading is the receptive phase of written communication. In written language, a message has been encoded by the writer in graphic symbols spatially distributed on the page. The reader does not merely pass his eyes over written language and record a stream of visual perceptual images. He must actively bring to hear his knowledge of language, his past experience, his conceptual attainments on the processing of language information encoded in the form of graphic symbols, in order to decode the written language. Reading must therefore be regarded as an interaction between the reader and written language, through which the reader attempts to reconstruct a message from the writer."[4]

For purposes of sharp contrast, the definitions of reading provided by Russell Stauffer and Leonard Bloomfield might be examined: Bloomfield claims that "Reading involves nothing more than the correlation of a sound image with its corresponding visual image, that is, the spelling."[5]

Russell Stauffer is in almost complete disagreement with Bloomfield. He writes, in Directing Reading Maturity as a Cognitive Process: "reading is a mental process requiring accurate word recognition, ability to call to mind particular meanings, and ability to shift or reassociate meanings - until the constructs presented are clearly grasped, critically evaluated, accepted or applied, or rejected. This means that knowledge gained through reading can increase understanding and, in turn, influence social and personal adjustment, enrich experience and stimulate thinking."[6] In terms of simple contrast, Stauffer included the uses of reading in his definition, Bloomfield doesn't.

What difference does all of this make? Should the teacher be advised to teach, following certain commonly accepted principles - individualized instruction, a flexible program, continuous diagnosis, etc., but not bothering to struggle with such abstractions as have been referred to? This is, of course much easier, but the issues can't really be avoided! A teachers beliefs do make a difference. If he operates from a decoding framework, a mechanistic

[4]Kenneth S. Goodman. "The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process: in The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process, Kenneth S. Goodman, editor Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1968, p. 15

[5]Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence Barnhart. Let's Read: A Linguistic Approach Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967, jacket cover.

[6]Russell G. Stauffer. Directing Reading Maturity as a Cognitive Process, New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

concept of reading instruction, programmed or adapted for the computer, as in the Stanford Project[7] is appropriate, as it is if reading, and the learner, are viewed in narrow terms, emphasizing specific facets of cognitive development and de-emphasizing or ignoring "the affective domain." One's definition of reading will not remain static. As a teacher studies his pupils, as he diagnoses, prescribes, changes techniques and materials to fit changing situations, his ideas regarding precisely what reading is will change. There is something wrong if change doesn't occur! There is just one more definition of reading to which reference should be made because it seems to be a rather sensible one, going neither to one extreme nor the other. Theodore Clymer suggests that reading begins as a decoding process: what follows is understanding the author's message (by 'follows', it is to be hoped that Clymer means an almost immediate movement from one 'stage' to the next. Otherwise one is left with the "why bother?" questions posed when one views decoding definitions.)

The third step involves the interpretation and evaluation of this message, and the last step Clymer identifies as "incorporating the author's ideas into one's thinking"[8] Clymer notes, and few would take issue with him, that if steps one and two haven't occurred, there's been no reading at all. If steps three and four are omitted, the reading has been superficial, and has left little or no impression on the reader.

The authors and publishers of most basal programs operate from a definition of reading which can best be called 'eclectic', hoping and striving to guide pupils' growth in both the coding and meaning facets of reading. They also place a great deal of confidence in the ability of the classroom teacher to vary the emphases from lesson to lesson, and to provide a program

[7] in chronological order:

a. Atkinson, Richard C. and Duncan N. Hansen. "Computer-assisted Instruction in Initial Reading: The Stanford Project, Reading Research Quarterly, Fall, 1966, pp. 5-26
b. Spache, George D. "A Reaction to Computer Assisted Instruction in Initial Reading: The Stanford Project, Reading Research Quarterly, Fall, 1967, pp. 101-110
c. Atkinson, Richard. A Reply to Professor Spache's Article, "a Reaction to Computer Assisted Instruction in Initial Reading," Reading Research Quarterly, Spring, 1968, pp. 418-420

[8] Theodore Clymer. "What is Reading?" Elementary School Notes, Language Arts Issue, 1967-1968. Boston, Ginn and Company

of instruction which is balanced, producing neither spitting, grunting 'word callers' nor pupils who guess at content after looking at the illustrations. There are, of course, obvious exceptions to this 'eclectic' approach.

Reading, then, is decoding, comprehending, evaluating, and, at its highest levels, internalizing. One emerges from a creative reading experience a somewhat different person than he was when he began reading. An encounter with a character, an event, or a sequence of some concepts with those which are more current, more accurate, more practical or, perhaps, all three. This too, is reading.

Every teacher has an obligation to know rather clearly why he's teaching reading; and why he's using the methods and materials he's selected. Without objectives, evaluation becomes a rather pointless, expensive exercise. How can diagnoisi be a "blueprint for instruction" unless and until some determination has been made regarding the relative significance of certain areas of strength and weakness? Is the child who can't find the main idea of a paragraph in more serious trouble then the child, who confuses -ed and -ing endings? The question can't be answered until one describes clearly and is operational terms what he means by the term reading.

It is, perhaps, time to put the two terms, now hopefully, adequately defined, together. What impact have linguists, and the results of their scholarship, had on materials, techniques, and approaches to reading instruction? The first area which occurs to most people who have thought about linguistics and reading is the area of 'phonics', or sound-symbol (phoneme-grapheme) relationships.

With reference to these relationships, it's not uncommon to hear or read comments like the following; which indicate some confusion about the contributions of linguists:

"Yes, they're going to teach my child to read next autumn. To decode, anyway. Well, to match sets of sounds to sets of letters. If he's fortunate, he'll have a teacher who gives him some honest-to-goodness stories, paragraphs, sentences, in other words some syntax - along with the minimal contrasts provided by the new linguistic readers. (There contrasts, by the way, were called word families in the old days.)"[9]

[9] Sam Sebasta. "My son, The Linguist and Reader", Elementary English, 45: 235, February, 1968.

Unfortunately, this writer is not alone. There are others, people who have earned our respect for their scholarship in some phase of the field of reading who accept, uncritically, the proposition that because some linguists, those with special interest in phoneme (sound) grapheme (written symbol) relationships have proposed theoretical approaches to reading instruction which seem to have much in common with the proposals made by supporters of one or another the "phonics" approaches to reading, that therefore the terms 'linguistics' and 'phonics' may be used interchangeable - are almost synonomous- This is not so.

Jeanne Chall, among others, avoids the terminology problem rather nicely by labeling all the approaches to reading which include a strong emphasis on helping children acquire a number of generalizations regarding sound-symbol relationships as those approaches with a "coding" emphasis That is, she considers, in one large category, all the programs which operate on the assumption that the major (almost the exclusive) task of the beginning reader is "breaking the code" - the "code" being the letters or combinations of letters which represent the significant sounds of American English. This is a somewhat unwarranted over-generalization and a rather simplistic approach to a very complex problem or series of problems. Any elementary teacher who has reviewed the Phonovisual materials, the Economy materials, the Lippencott, Fries, Let's Read, and Harper Row programs, to identify just a few, could suggest with little or no difficulty striking differences.

It is a mistake, to assume that the term "coding" emphasis is more inclusive than it is; it's value lies in it's focus on the objective, which is one of the few factors these programs have in common: Programs, those names previously and others, which claim to have a coding emphasis stress the importance of helping the beginning reader see very clearly the relationships between the thirty five to forty five significant sound units (phonemes) in American English and the twenty six letters we have to represent these sounds (graphemes). The advocates of those programs advocating a strong "coding" emphasis are in general agreement that the overriding, by far the most important objective of any reading program at the beginning levels is to guide the child toward independence in the application of word analysis

skills - to help him break the code. The techniques used and the materials provided to help the child do this are very, very different. There are a number of ways one can travel between two points - two cities, perhaps, but the objective, arriving at point B from point A, is the same. There are, apparently, a number of ways a child can learn to "break the code". The goal is the same, the methods used to reach the goal are not.

Linguistics and phonics are not the same.

Charels Fries in Linguistics and Reading writes: "Linguistics has much more to offer than a simple "back to phonics" proposal."[10] He defines phonics as follows: We shall use the word phonics to represent the various sets of teaching practices that aim to develop the pupil's ability to sound out a word,"[11] or "practices in the teaching of reading that have aimed at matching the individual letters of the alphabet with specific sounds of English pronunciation."[12] Because "phonetics" is frequently, and incorrectly, confused with the term "phonics", it would be useful to note Fries' distinction: Phonetics, as he defines it, refers to "the physical differences that characterize each of the vocal sounds[13] or, "Phonetics is a set of techniques by which to identify and describe, in absolute terms, all the differences of sound features that occur in a language.[14]" You'll notice that Fries doesn't refer to the importance or significance of these differences. This aspect of contrast moves on into the field of phonemics: sip is not the same as zip; the initial sounds differ, and the differences ase significant in terms of meaning. The three sounds represented by the letter 't' in the words top, pot and stop are not quite the same, but differences in meaning are not signalled by the variations. Phonemics, then, is, according to Fries, "A set of techniques by which to identify and then to describe, especially in terms of distribution, the bundles of sound contrasts that constitute the structural units that mark the work patterns."[15] Briefly, it might be noted for purposes of contrast that a phonemic difference signals a shift in meaning; a phonetic difference does not.

[10] C. C. Fries. Linguistics and Reading, New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston 1963. pp. 134.

[11] ibid; p 141

[12] ibid; p 143, 144

[13] ibid; p 149

[14] ibid; p 150

[15] ibid; p 156

Whether or not one states that the number of phonemes in American English is 35, 38, or 40, it is clear that we have only 26 letters in the alphabet to represent these sounds. How much difficulty does this cause? The evidence is conflicting; Results of the Hannas study suggest that about half the words on the 17,000 word Thorndike list can be spelled without error by those possessing a few basic algorithms regarding sound-symbol relationships: more specifically, C-V-C pattern words are dependable in terms of pronunciation, given the spelling, and the sequence of letters is dependably predictable, given the sequence of sounds. Henry Lee Smith goes further: he claims, in a film lecture (to be seen later this morning,) that 85% of our words in American English have a predictable sound-symbol relationship, but, he adds, the 15% of the words which are <u>not</u> spelled "regularly", according to reliable phoneme-grapheme correspondence generalizations, occur about 85% of the time. This is helpful, at least in terms of contrast, if not accuracy, and it nicely focuses the problem of the beginning reader. The speaking vocabulary of the beginning reader is, according to Jeanne Chall, something like 12,000 to 14,000 words - this is a debatable figure, and different experts provide data which are different. Nevertheless, the child's speaking vocabulary far outdistances his reading vocabulary, and any effort to bridge the gap brings into play words which <u>do not pattern</u>. Give, have, come, and love are common words, and <u>do not</u> follow the "silent e" generalizations as do hate, and home and ride. To exert <u>no</u> vocabulary control over the introduction of words, to present at the same time those words which follow somewhat dependable patterns, and those which are "exceptions", to have, in the same sentence, the letter i representing the sounds in sick, hide, and machine, or to have the sound represented by i in hit, also represented by 'o' in women, 'u', in busy, 'y' in myth and hymn, etc. etc. seems to give a very clear message to a child: the <u>clue</u> is memorization; no sense can be made of this thing called reading. One alternative, suggested by Bloomfield, is to concentrate on developing competence in decoding; to group the basic generalizations regarding sound-symbol (phoneme-grapheme) correspondence, and do this by presenting words, and non-words, in a carefully prescribed

sequence beginning with the famous Nan can fan Dan. Fries prefers Pat a fat cat, and decries the use of "nonsense syllables". Both approaches, however, emphasize the value of working with sound-letter combinations, not the isolated spits, grunts and groans which characterize so much phonics work. Blending is not a problem if there's been no artificial fracturing! Neither of the extreme solutions to the phoneme-grapheme problem identified is particularly satisfactory, One seems to force a "rate" approach to decoding, the other to divest reading of much meaning. Linguists, especially those like Richard Venezky who have studied, very carefully, the facts about sound-symbol relationships can help clarify and make more accurate the work in this important facet of reading instruction.

To more specifically delineate linguists' criticisms of the work so typically done as part of phonics programs, Ronald Wardhaugh lists the following among those teaching-learning procedures which are linguistically indefensible:

1) Statements about letters have sounds as for example, "these letters must be blended to arrive at the correct sound." Letters are letters and sounds are sounds; they must not be confused with each other. (It is not at all certain that the affects of such drill as p - puh puh puh, t - tuh tuh tuh on a child's current or eventual independence in reading are beneficial and positive.)

2) Statements about syllabication which apply only to word breaking conventions in printing when these statements are made into rules of pronunciation, as when butter is broken into but-ter and monkey into mon-key. There is only one medial consonant in butter and its phonetic quality derives from its relationship to both vowels in the word, not just the first. (This audience need not be told that letters don't have or make sounds. Letters or a letter represent or represents a sound.)

3) Statements about slurring, poor enunciation, incorrect artiulation, and mispronunciations, as when 'doing' is said to be "incorrectly" pronounced as doin' a whole set of such shibboleths exists.

4) Statements about "long" and "short" vowels, as when mad is said to have a short vowel and mate a long vowel (even though in any pronunciation

the writer has heard the second vowel is shorter in duration than the first!) Allophonic vowel length depends on whether it is followed by a voiced or voiceless consonant. There might be something like "long" and "short" vowels in English, but they are nothing like those in the books on reading. (incidentally, Richard Venezky prefers the terms "free" and "checked" to "long" and "short").[16]

5) Statements which do not allow for well known dialectic variations, as when the word when is always taught as/hwen/no matter which part of the United States the child comes from, or due as /dyuw/or pin and pen which cannot be /pin/.

The speaker must note, with considerable embarrassment, her shock in seeing pin and pen listed as homophones on a chart in a classroom in Gary, Indiana. Further consideration causes her to wish she could remember the teacher's name! Her wisdom and courage deserve recognition! She recalls, too, with much amusement, the plight of the student teacher whose dialect included roof as /ruf/ but who struggled valiantly with a workbook exercise in which children were to mark it /ruf/! Careful listening elicited about a fifty-fifty division on the children's part. Words like that should either be omitted from phonics exercises or treated with great flexibility' We've finally adjusted to accepting creek as /krek/ or krik/, or at least Thorndike-Barnhart and Merriam Webster have! Wardhaugh concludes: ". . . if existing phonics methods are better than other methods in teaching beginning reading, how much better would be a phonics method based on linguistically defensible information. How much better it would be to base phonics on what one knows about language than to go on perpetuating the present content of phonics. If phonics does succeed, one must be paying a high cost for that success, or else that success is a testimony, not to the people who devised the phonics system in use or who wrote the books on phonics methods, but to the children who learned to read, in spite of it all. But never forget, children cannot be stopped from learning, only hindered to a greater or lesser degree."[17]

[16] Richard Venezky. "English Orthography: Its Graphical Structure and its Relation to Sound", Reading Research Quarterly, 2:82 Spring , 1967

[17] Ronald Wardhaugh. "The Teaching of Phonics and Comprehension: A Linguistic Comparison", Psycholinguistics and The Teaching of Reading, Kenneth S. Goodman and James T. Fleming, editors. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969.

In summary, then, the distinctions between what is typically termed "phonics" and linguistically oriented work directed toward helping children acquire useful, accurate sound-symbol relationship generalizations are as follows; 1) Linguistically oriented sound-symbol relationship work is based on the considerable body of knowledge acquired about that phase of our language. This body of knowledge is expanding; no linguist would suggest his proposals are completely accurate, all that will ever be needed in this area. Unfortunately some phonics programs have become frozen, and at a pretty low level of knowledge. 2) Phonics programs, in too many cases, are dehumanized; ideolects and dialects are both ignored, and the work is prescriptive, mechanical and, therefore, frequently irrelevant. (Please don't ask for a comment on the human element involved in Is this a man? Is this a pan? Is this a fan? Linguists aren't perfect, either!) 3) The most serious indictment of many phonics programs relates to their inaccuracies. Those in this audience are far too sophisticated to do more than smile tolerantly when asked to react to the "when two vowels go walking the first one does the talking" bromide; this horror, and worse, are perpetrated, daily in far too many classrooms. One doesn't refer to "silent letters", to syllabication rules as infalliable guides to pronunciation and finally, and most important, one doesn't ask "what sound c makes!"

To quote Wardhaugh again: "anyone seriously interested in teaching children to read must be prepared to acquire a knowledge of the phonological system of English. He must also find out how that system is represented in English orthography; how people, particularly six-year olds, actually speak; and how such speech varies in the different dimensions of social and regional dialects. He must also become aware that children know their language when they come to school (for they can speak) and that grammatical and lexical knowledge as well as phonological knowledge is brought by children to the task of reading."[18] In other words, to borrow a term from Arthur Heilman, work with wound-symbol relationships should be kept "in proper perspective", and the teacher must never forget the "wholeness" of language.

The work done in helping children achieve independence in reading is important, vital, in fact. This work can be more accurate, more relevant and

[18] Wardhaugh, op. cit., p. 85

more functional for children, and their teachers, if we keep growing in our knowledge of our language and use every opportunity to keep abreast of additional linguistic insights.

The influence of linguists is also apparent in other facets of reading instruction, although the evidence is not as clear as it is in the phonics-linguistics controversy just discussed. Time is short, and these can be briefly summarized:

1. Because of structural linguists' emphasis upon the primacy of speech, oral language, (and the rather naive assumption, early in the 'structuralist' era that print was "talk, written down") reading materials, even at the beginning levels, are more natural, with more use of contractions, more typical conversational style (the traditional first grade teacher-automobile accident joke shouldn't get such a big laugh today!) There is, as a result, less redundancy, and vocabulary controls have been relaxed considerably. In fact, the new basal reading materials are more challenging and more difficult, if more interesting and relevant.

2 Illustrations are assuming a somewhat different relationship to text materials; Bloomfield and Fries both complained that the use of pictures and reliance upon these as context clues encouraged guessing - the miscue 'home' for 'house' or vice versa. The claim now is that pictures support, reinforce, but do not 'give away' the text.

3. Oral reading (the term re-reading is to be preferred because one of the few consistent findings from research is that comprehension and speed both suffer if silent reading doesn't precede oral) has staged something of a 'come back', in a positive sense. What can be done with round-robin reading circles consisting of the oral reading of a series of paragraphs is problematical. A teacher that far removed from approved practices may be beyond help! It is clear that relating oral language to print is essential. Dictating experience charts is part of this process; and so is purposeful oral re-reading to illustrate humor, character motivation, or for any of a variety of purposes - perhaps entertaining classmates is justification enough!

4. The use of contractions and more'natural' language has already been mentioned. One also finds more frequent use of sentence patterns other

than the NP + VP, kernel sentence, or simple sentence. Sentences which appear in materials designed for use in beginning reading programs are more 'involved' - there is more use of clauses, for example. The reason has already been noted - concern for making the language of the first reader (on the sixth) and the language of the first grader (on the sixth) less disparate. Success in this area has been limited - even the books which have been purposely designed to appeal to inner city/urban children are still remarkably middle class in orientation. Neverthe less, the trend is clearly in this direction - reflecting linguists' concern for oral language, speech, and their view of the writing system as a reflection of this more basic aspect of language.

Linguists have made many useful contributions to the field of reading instruction. They've caused us to be more precise in stating what we mean by reading. They've helped us approach the study of sound-symbol relationships in a much more scientific manner, and this body of knowledge is growing. Word analysis skills programs, in the future, should be much better as a result. Finally, linguists have caused those charged with the development of reading materials to use language which is more human, more natural, and easier for children to interpret and relate to.

They shouldn't attempt to define reading for elementary teachers. They shouldn't try to establish prioriteis or pontificate the sequence of skills to be taught. If they move out of their areas of high competence, studying in a careful rigorous manner the operations of a language, - in our case, American English, and reporting their findings in terms which a writer, publisher or teasher can understand, and attempt to dictate method, technique, facets of classroom practice, then teachers have a right to question the contributions of linguists.

There are a vast number of unanswered questions about reading. Nothing less than a 'team' approach, convergence techniques, if you prefer, will result in theoretically sound, practical answers. Physicians, neurologists, psychologists and not one but several kinds of linguists can and must work with educators if 'Right to Read' and 'Fail safe' schools are to become more than slogans.

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